

To the members of the Human Services Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Johanna Snyder, and I am writing in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. I am the food pantry coordinator at Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS) in New Haven. We serve more than 500 families a week who are experiencing food insecurity in the Greater New Haven area. Folks who seek food assistance often do so because they must prioritize other financial concerns over having enough food - like having to choose between necessary medication and adequate groceries. Our undocumented patrons feel this strain acutely, particularly because many of them are currently unable to attain health insurance due to their immigration status.

Health care is a human right. By excluding members of our Connecticut community from accessing HUSKY because of their immigration status, we are denying hundreds of thousands of people, mostly low-income people of color, a human right. Not only that, but undocumented immigrants in Connecticut contribute about 145 million dollars in state and local taxes each year, thereby helping to fund the very state health programs that they are currently unable to access. Additionally, being uninsured often forces people to forgo preventative care and rely on emergency services when health concerns are no longer avoidable. Emergency care is not only expensive for uninsured individuals, but it is also costly for hospitals and insurers, who then shift these costs to health insurance premiums and Medicaid, making healthcare more expensive for everyone. Expanding HUSKY access to all Connecticut residents, regardless of immigration status, would allow folks to access necessary preventative care, and would save them and the state money by reducing reliance on emergency services.

If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a thriving, growing workforce, we must ensure that all individuals have access to health coverage, regardless of immigration status. I support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. In the future, I ask the committee to work toward allowing HUSKY access to all immigrants, regardless of age.

Thank you for your dedication to this issue,
Johanna Snyder